

FACTS ABOUT ORAL CANCER

- An estimated 30,200 new oral cancer cases will be diagnosed this year.
- Although the percentage of deaths has been decreasing since 1980, nearly 8,000 Americans die annually from oral cancer.
- Smoking in combination with heavy alcohol consumption (30+ drinks/week) is the primary risk factor for oral cancer.
- Oral cancer is more likely to strike after the age of 40.
- Additional risk factors that may be linked to oral cancer include: chewing tobacco use; regular, prolonged exposure to the sun (lip cancer).
- Studies suggest that a diet high in fruits and vegetables may prevent the development of potentially cancerous lesions.
- Oral cancer can affect any area of the oral cavity including the lips, gum tissues, cheek lining, tongue, and the hard or soft palate.
- Symptoms of oral cancer include:
 - + a sore that bleeds easily or does not heal
 - + a color change of the oral tissues
 - + a lump, thickening, rough spot, crust or small eroded area
 - + pain, tenderness, or numbness anywhere in the mouth or on the lips
 - + difficulty chewing, swallowing, speaking, or moving the jaw or tongue
 - + a change in the way the teeth fit together
- Regular visits to the dentist can increase the chance of early detection, which can improve the potential for successful treatment.